

under our great leader from North Dakota, Senator CONRAD—we have said for the first time we are going to fund veterans services at the level the veterans organizations say we need. We are going to use the numbers they recommend. We have seen consistently under this administration an underfunding of those things which are needed by our veterans coming home, the top of which has been health care, mental health services, and rehabilitative services.

We, since January, have made veterans health care the top priority. I am proud of the fact that we have added dollars. We have addressed the system problems. We have looked at what we need to be doing for families, both of Active military as well as our veterans. We don't have any concern at all about standing up and saying that we have been putting our veterans first, despite filibuster after filibuster after filibuster. Anyone watching will see more this week. It seems to be the nature of things today. But we have increased the dollars, the resources, the commitment—keeping our promises to veterans. We have done that in the budget for next year. We have done that in the funding available now. It is part of our overall vision and commitment.

We are getting results for middle-class Americans. That is what we are all about, the folks who are sending their children, husbands, and wives to the war to fight for our country, coming home, expecting us to keep the promises the country has made as it relates to veterans. We take that extremely seriously. We are keeping those promises as part of our efforts to get results for the American people. We intend to do that in this budget we will pass, that will go to the President, that will be historic in that it is keeping the promises to our veterans that they expect us to keep.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. STABENOW). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FARM BILL

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, before I begin my speech today on the Wild Horse border crossing legislation, I want to say a couple things in reference to the farm will, and I will be speaking on it, potentially, later today. But if what I have heard this morning here in morning business is correct, I ask the leadership on the other side of the aisle to bring that caucus together.

The farm bill is far too important to play politics. It is a critical issue dealing with this country's food security and dealing with this country's family

farmers. As I have said many times before, if we ever lose family farm agriculture in this country, this country will change for the worse—no ifs, ands, or buts about it. This farm bill is a good farm bill, passing out of committee, I believe, unanimously. It is a bill that deserves an honest debate by this body and deserves passage. It is critically important that this happen very soon, that we set our differences aside and work together to get this bill done.

WILD HORSE BORDER CROSSING

Mr. TESTER. With that, Madam President, I want to announce that yesterday I introduced a piece of legislation that will establish a 24-hour port of entry at the Port of Wild Horse, which is north of Havre, MT.

This legislation will establish this 24-hour port on the Montana-Alberta border. American trade with Alberta is growing at a rapid rate. Excluding pipeline shipments, Alberta's exports to the United States have grown 86 percent over the last decade. America's exports to Alberta have increased 75 percent. So it is a good deal in both directions.

The United States now sells more than \$12.5 billion worth of goods to Alberta, most of which moves by truck through just five border crossings—only one of which is open 24 hours a day.

Commerce between the United States and Alberta is expected to increase. The Canadian development of the Alberta oil sands region means the United States is sending more heavy machinery north of the border. That is traffic which must move by truck. But today, truck traffic from Texas and other main shippers of these products must go hundreds of miles out of the way to reach the oil sands region. According to one Canadian study, an additional \$4 billion worth of goods will be needed annually as the oil sands are developed in Alberta. This represents more than 40,000 truckloads of goods each year.

If all these trucks—as well as the 160,000 trucks that currently pass through our 24-hour port of Sweetgrass—were forced to move through the one existing 24-hour border crossing, the result would be an average of 480 trucks crossing it every day of each year. There is little doubt that such a pace would be both economically insufficient and unsustainable for our security needs. It would be faster and more economical for many of these products to move to the oil sands area through an eastern Alberta crossing, such as a crossing north of Havre at Wild Horse, and that is exactly what this legislation will do.

The State of Montana and the Provincial Government of Alberta have both passed resolutions calling for an upgrade to the border crossing at Wild Horse. Over the next few months, Senator BAUCUS and I will work with our

colleagues and with Customs and Border Protection to determine how best to accomplish this goal.

I understand that CBP faces numerous staffing challenges in order to meet this proposal. I have tried in my short time in the Senate to highlight and address these challenges. But the cost of ignoring economic growth in Alberta and the border crossing needs in that region would be harmful to Montana's economy and to our Nation's economy. For that reason, I am pleased to have offered this bill.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RELEASE OF AITZAZ AHSAN

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a matter of great personal concern with respect to events in Pakistan.

On last Saturday, a Pakistani leader, Aitzaz Ahsan, was arrested while conducting a press conference in Islamabad. Aitzaz Ahsan is one of the most distinguished jurists in Pakistan. He is the chief counsel to the Chief Justice of the Pakistani Supreme Court. He is the head of the Pakistani Supreme Court Bar Association. He is a longtime leader, or was a longtime leader in Pakistani Parliament. He has represented people ranging across the political divide in Pakistan, from Prime Minister Bhutto to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Sharif, although a political opponent, hired him to be his chief counsel.

Mr. President, this is a personal matter because Mr. Ahsan's son is a close friend of our family. I want to say further about Mr. Ahsan that he is pro-Western. He is prodemocracy. He was educated at Cambridge. His son is a close friend of our family, who went to Harvard University, graduated there, went to Yale Law School, graduated there, served in the very prestigious law firm of Cleary Gottlieb in New York, was then hired by Kofi Annan to be a speech writer for him at the United Nations, a post where he continues to serve.

I have, yesterday, written a letter to President Musharraf asking for the immediate release of Aitzaz Ahsan. Today, I am circulating a letter among colleagues asking them to sign the letter to President Musharraf, asking for intervention.

Mr. Ahsan is not the type of person who ought to be detained, arrested, threatened. That is not going to build respect for democratic institutions or for the future relationship of our countries.